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S P E E C H

OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT.

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(TWO SHILLINGS).

Printed by T. Burton, }
Little Queen-street. }

5 Feb. 1800

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S P E E C H

OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT, K

DELIVERED IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1800,

ON A

MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS TO THE THRONE,

*Approving of the Answers returned to the Communications
from France*

RELATIVE TO A

NEGOCIATION FOR PEACE.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. WRIGHT, PICCADILLY.

1800.

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RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT

HOUSE OF COMMONS

WEDNESDAY, 14th FEBRUARY 1800

MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS TO THE THRONE

RELATIVE TO A

NEGOTIATION FOR PEACE

SECOND EDITION



PRINTED FOR J. WILKINS, ST. MARTIN'S LANE

1800

SPEECH

OF THE

Right Honourable William Pitt,

&c. &c.

SIR,

I AM induced, at this period of the debate, to offer my sentiments to the House, both from an apprehension that, at a later hour, the attention of the House must necessarily be exhausted, and because the sentiment with which the Honourable and Learned Gentleman * began his Speech, and with which he has thought proper to conclude it, places the Question precisely on that ground on which I am most desirous of discussing it. The learned Gentleman seems to assume, as the foundation of his reasoning, and as the great argument for immediate treaty, that every effort to overturn the system of the

• Mr. Erskine,

French

French Revolution must be unavailing, and that it would be not only imprudent, but almost impious to struggle longer against that order of things, which, on I know not what principle of predestination, he appears to consider as immortal. Little as I am inclined to accede to this opinion, I am not sorry that the Honourable Gentleman has contemplated the subject in this serious view. I do indeed consider the French Revolution as the severest trial which the visitation of Providence has ever yet inflicted upon the nations of the earth; but I cannot help reflecting, with satisfaction, that this Country, even under such a trial, has not only been exempted from those calamities which have covered almost every other part of Europe, but appears to have been reserved as a refuge and asylum to those who fled from its persecution, as a barrier to oppose its progress, and perhaps ultimately as an instrument to deliver the world from the crimes and miseries which have attended it.

Under this impression, I trust, the House will forgive me, if I endeavour, as far as I am able, to take a large and comprehensive view of this
important

important question. In doing so, I agree with my Honourable Friend, that it would, in any case, be impossible to separate the present discussion from the former crimes and atrocities of the French Revolution; because both the papers now on the table, and the whole of the Learned Gentleman's argument, force upon our consideration, the origin of the war, and all the material facts which have occurred during its continuance. The Learned Gentleman has revived and retailed all those arguments from his own pamphlet, which had before passed through thirty-seven or thirty-eight Editions in print, and now gives them to the House, embellished by the graces of his personal delivery. The First Consul has also thought fit to revive and retail the chief arguments used by all the Opposition Speakers, and all the Opposition Publishers, in this Country during the last seven years. And (what is still more material) the question itself, which is now immediately at issue—the question, whether, under the present circumstances, there is such a prospect of security from any Treaty with France, as ought to induce us to negotiate, cannot be properly decided upon, without retracing, both

from our own experience, and from that of other Nations, the Nature, the Causes, and the Magnitude of the Danger, against which we have to guard, in order to judge of the security which we ought to accept.

I say then, that before any man can concur in opinion with that Learned Gentleman; before any man can think that the substance of his Majesty's Answer is any other than the safety of the Country required; before any man can be of opinion, that to the overtures made by the enemy, at such a time, and under such circumstances, it would have been safe to have returned an answer concurring in the negociation—he must come within one of the three following descriptions: He must either believe, that the French Revolution neither does now exhibit, nor has at any time exhibited such circumstances of danger, arising out of the very nature of the system and the internal state and condition of France, as to leave to foreign powers no adequate ground of security in negociation; or, secondly, he must be of opinion, that the change which has recently

taken

taken place, has given that security, which, in the former stages of the Revolution, was wanting ; or, thirdly, he must be one who, believing that the danger existed, not undervaluing its extent, nor mistaking its nature, nevertheless thinks, from his view of the present pressure on the Country, from his view of its situation and its prospects, compared with the situation and prospects of its enemies, that we are, with our eyes open, bound to accept of inadequate security for every thing that is valuable and sacred, rather than endure the pressure, or incur the risk which would result from a farther prolongation of the contest.

In discussing the last of these Questions, we shall be led to consider, what inference is to be drawn from the circumstances and the result of our own negociations in former periods of the war ;—whether, in the comparative State of this Country and France, we now see the same reason for repeating our then unsuccessful experiments ;—or whether we have not thence derived the lessons of experience

experience, added to the deductions of reason, marking the inefficacy and danger of the very measures which are quoted to us as precedents for our adoption.

Unwilling, Sir, as I am, to go into much detail on ground which has been so often trodden before ; yet, when I find the Learned Gentleman, after all the information which he must have received ; if he has read any of the Answers to his Work, (however ignorant he might be when he wrote it) still giving the sanction of his authority to the supposition, that the order to M. Chauvelin to depart from this kingdom was the cause of the War between this Country and France, I do feel it necessary to say a few words on that part of the subject.

Inaccuracy in dates seems to be a sort of fatality common to all who have written on that side of the Question ; for even the writer of the Note to His Majesty is not more correct, in this respect, than if he had taken his information only from the pamphlet of the Learned Gentleman.

tleman. The House will recollect the first professions of the French Republic, which are enumerated, and enumerated truly, in that note,—they are tests of every thing which would best recommend a Government to the esteem and confidence of Foreign Powers, and the reverse of every thing which has been the system and practice of France now for near ten years. It is there stated, that their first principles were love of peace, aversion to conquest, and respect for the independence of other Countries. In the same note, it seems indeed admitted that they since have violated all those principles, but it is alledged that they have done so, only in consequence of the provocation of other powers. One of the first of those provocations is stated to have consisted in the various outrages offered to their ministers, of which the example is said to have been set by the King of Great Britain in his conduct to M. Chauvelin. In answer to this supposition, it is only necessary to remark, that before the example was given, before Austria and Prussia are supposed to have been thus encouraged to combine in a plan for the partition of France;

that

that plan, if it ever existed at all, had existed and been acted upon for above eight months : France and Prussia had been at war eight months before the dismissal of M. Chauvelin. So much for the accuracy of the statement.

[Mr. Erskine here observed that this was not the statement of his argument.]

I have been hitherto commenting on the arguments contained in the Notes, I come now to those of the Learned Gentleman. I understand him to say, that the dismissal of M. Chauvelin was the real cause, I do not say of the general war, but of the rupture between France and England; and the Learned Gentleman states, particularly, that this dismissal rendered all discussion of the points in dispute impossible. Now I desire to meet distinctly every part of this assertion: I maintain on the contrary, that an opportunity was given for discussing every matter in dispute between France and Great Britain, as fully as if a regular and accredited French Minister had been

been resident here;—that the causes of war, which existed at the beginning, or arose during the course of this discussion, were such as would have justified, twenty times over, a declaration of war on the part of this Country;—that all the explanations on the part of France, were evidently unsatisfactory and inadmissible, and that M. Chauvelin had given in a peremptory ultimatum, declaring, that if these explanations were not received as sufficient, and if we did not immediately disarm, our refusal would be considered as a declaration of war.

After this followed that scene which no man can even now speak of without horror, or think of without indignation; that murder and regicide from which I was sorry to hear the Learned Gentleman date the beginning of the legal Government of France.

Having thus given in their ultimatum, they added, as a farther demand (while we were smarting under accumulated injuries, for which all satisfaction was denied) that we should in-

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stantly .

stantly receive M. Chauvelin as their Ambassador, with new credentials, representing them in the character which they had just derived from the murder of their sovereign. We replied, " he came here as the representative of a sovereign whom you have put to a cruel and illegal death, we have no satisfaction for the injuries we have received, no security from the danger with which we are threatened. Under these circumstances we will not receive your new credentials; the former credentials you have yourselves recalled by the sacrifice of your king."

What, from that moment, was the situation of M. Chauvelin? He was reduced to the situation of a private individual, and was required to quit the kingdom, under the provisions of the Alien-Act, which, for the purpose of securing domestic tranquillity, had recently invested his Majesty with the power of removing out of this kingdom, all foreigners suspected of revolutionary principles. Is it contended that he was, then, less liable to the provisions of that act than any other individual foreigner, whose conduct
afforded

afforded to government just ground of objection or suspicion? Did his conduct and connections here afford no such ground? or will it be pretended that the bare act of refusing to receive fresh credentials from an infant republic, not then acknowledged by any one power of Europe, and in the very act of heaping upon us injuries and insults, was of itself a cause of war? So far from it, that even the very nations of Europe, whose wisdom and moderation have been repeatedly extolled for maintaining neutrality, and preserving friendship, with the French republic, remained for years subsequent to this period, without receiving from it any accredited minister, or doing any one act to acknowledge its political existence.

In answer to a representation from the belligerent powers, in December, 1793, Count Bernstorff, the minister of Denmark, officially declared, that, “ It was well known, that the
 “ National Convention had appointed M. Grou-
 “ ville Minister-Plenipotentiary at Denmark, but
 “ that it was also well known, that he had nei-
 “ ther been received nor acknowledged in that
 c 2 “ quality.

“ quality.* ” And as late as February, 1796, when the same minister was at length, for the first time, received in his official capacity, Count Bernstorff, in a public Note, assigned this reason for that change of conduct, “ So long as no
 “ other than a revolutionary government existed
 “ in France, his Majesty could not acknowledge
 “ the minister of that government ; but now that
 “ the French constitution is completely organized, and a regular government established in
 “ France, his Majesty’s obligation ceases in that
 “ respect, and M. Grouville will therefore be
 “ acknowledged in the usual form.”† How far the Court of Denmark was justified in the opinion, that a revolutionary government then no longer existed in France, it is not now necessary to inquire ; but whatever may have been the fact, in that respect, the principle on which they acted is clear and intelligible, and is a decisive instance in favour of the proposition which I have maintained.

* State Papers published for Debrett, vol. 1. p. 338.

† Ibid. vol. 4. p. 306.

Is it then necessary to examine what were the terms of that ultimatum, with which we refused to comply? Acts of hostility had been openly threatened against our Allies; an hostility founded upon the assumption of a right which would at once supersede the whole law of nations; the pretended right to open the Scheldt we discussed, at the time, not so much on account of its immediate importance, (though it was important both in a maritime and commercial view) as on account of the general principle on which it was founded. On the same arbitrary notion they soon afterwards discovered that sacred law of nature, which made the Rhine and the Alps the legitimate boundaries of France, and assumed the power which they have affected to exercise through the whole of the revolution, of superseding, by a new code of their own, all the recognized principles of the law of nations. They were, in fact, actually advancing towards the republic of Holland, by rapid strides, after the victory of Jemappes, and they had ordered their generals to pursue the Austrian troops into any neutral country:

country: thereby explicitly avowing an intention of invading Holland. They had already shewn their moderation and self-denial, by incorporating Belgium with the French Republic. These lovers of peace, who set out with a sworn aversion to conquest, and professions of respect for the independence of other nations; who pretend that they departed from this system, only in consequence of your aggression, themselves in time of peace, while you were still confessedly neutral, without the pretence or shadow of provocation, wrested Savoy from the King of Sardinia, and had proceeded to incorporate it likewise with France. These were their aggressions at this period; and more than these. They had issued an universal Declaration of War against all the Thrones of Europe; and they had, by their conduct, applied it particularly and specifically to you: they had passed the Decree of the 19th of November, proclaiming the promise of French succour to all nations who should manifest a wish to become free: they had, by all their language, as well as their example, shewn what they understood to be freedom: they had sealed their principles by the depo-

deposition of their sovereign: they had applied them to England, by inviting and encouraging the addressees of those seditious and traitorous societies, who, from the beginning, favoured their views, and who, encouraged by your forbearance, were even then publicly avowing French doctrines, and anticipating their success in this country: who were hailing the progress of those proceedings in France, which led to the murder of its king: they were even then looking to the day when they should behold a National Convention in England, formed upon similar principles.

And what were the explanations they offered on these different grounds of offence? As to Holland; they told you, the Scheldt was too insignificant for you to trouble yourselves about, and therefore it was to be decided as they chose, in breach of positive treaty, which they had themselves guaranteed, and which we, by our alliance, were bound to support. If, however, after the war was over, Belgium should have consolidated its liberty, (a term of which we

now know the meaning, from the fate of every nation into which the arms of France have penetrated) then Belgium and Holland might, if they pleased, settle the question of the Scheldt, by separate negociation between themselves. With respect to aggrandizement, they assured us, that they would retain possession of Belgium by arms, no longer than they should find it necessary to the purpose already stated, of consolidating its liberty. And with respect to the decree of the 19th of November, applied as it was pointedly to you, by all the intercourse I have stated with all the seditious and traitorous part of this Country, and particularly by the speeches of every leading man among them, they contented themselves with asserting, that the declaration conveyed no such meaning as was imputed to it, and that, so far from encouraging sedition, it could apply only to countries where a great majority of the people should have already declared itself in favour of a revolution; a supposition which, as they asserted, necessarily implied a total absence of all sedition.

What

What would have been the effect of admitting this explanation?—to suffer a nation, and an armed nation, to preach to the inhabitants of all the countries in the world, that they themselves were slaves, and their rulers tyrants: to encourage and invite them to revolution, by a previous promise of French support, to whatever might call itself a majority, or to whatever France might declare to be so. This was the their explanation: and this, they told you, was their ultimatum.

But was this all? Even at that very moment, when they were endeavouring to induce you to admit these explanations, to be contented with the avowal, that France offered herself as a general guarantee for every successful revolution, and would interfere only to sanction and confirm whatever the free and uninfluenced choice of the people might have decided, what were their orders to their generals on the same subject? in the midst of these amicable explanations with you, came forth a decree which I really believe must be effaced from the minds of Gentlemen opposite to me, if they can prevail upon themselves

for a moment to hint even a doubt upon the origin of this quarrel, not only as to this Country, but as to all the Nations of Europe with whom France has been subsequently engaged in hostility. I speak of the Decree of the 15th of December. This decree, more even than all the previous transactions, amounted to an universal declaration of war against all Thrones, and against all Civilized Governments. It said, wherever the armies of France shall come, (whether within countries then at war or at peace is not distinguished) in all those countries it shall be the first care of their generals to introduce the principles and the practice of the French Revolution ; to demolish all privileged orders, and every thing which obstructs the establishment of their New System.

If any doubt is entertained, whither the armies of France were intended to come ; if it is contended that they referred only to those nations with whom they were then at war, or with whom, in the course of this contest, they might be driven into war ; let it be remembered, that at this very moment, they had actually given orders to their

Generals to pursue the Austrian army from the Netherlands into Holland, with whom they were at that time in peace. Or, even if the construction contended for is admitted, let us see what would have been its application, let us look at the list of their aggressions, which was read by my Right Honorable Friend* near me. With whom they have been at war since the period of this declaration? With all the nations of Europe save two,† and if not with those two, it is only because, with every provocation that could justify defensive war, those Countries have hitherto acquiesced in repeated violations of their rights, rather than recur to war for their vindication. Wherever their arms have been carried it will be a matter of short subsequent inquiry to trace whether they have faithfully applied these principles. If in terms, this Decree is a denunciation of war against all Governments; if in practice it has been applied against every one with which France has come into contact; what is it but the deliberate code of the French

* Mr. Dundas.

† Sweden and Denmark.

Revolution, from the birth of the republic, which has never once been departed from, which has been enforced with unremitted rigour against all the nations that have come into their power?

If there could otherwise be any doubt whether the application of this decree was intended to be universal, whether it applied to all nations, and to England particularly? There is one circumstance, which alone, would be decisive—that nearly at the same period it was proposed, in the National Convention,* to declare expressly, that the decree of the Nineteenth of November was confined to the nations with whom they were then at war; and that proposal was rejected by a great majority; by that very Convention from whom we were desired to receive these explanations as satisfactory.

Such, Sir, was the nature of the system. Let us examine a little farther, whether it was from the beginning intended to be acted upon, in the

* On a Motion of M. Baraillon.

extent which I have stated. At the very moment when their threats appeared to many, little else than the ravings of madmen, they were digesting and methodizing the means of execution, as accurately as if they had actually foreseen the extent to which they have since been able to realize their criminal projects; they sat down coolly to devise the most regular and effectual mode of making the application of this system the current business of the day, and incorporating it with the general orders of their army; for (will the House believe it,) this confirmation of the decree of the Nineteenth of November was accompanied by an exposition and commentary addressed to the General of every army of France, containing a schedule as coolly conceived, and as methodically reduced, as any by which the most quiet business of a Justice of Peace, or the most regular Routine of any department of State in this country could be conducted. Each Commander was furnished with one general blank formula of a letter for all the nations of the world! The People of France to the People of Greeting, "We are come to expel your tyrants." Even
this

this was not all ; one of the articles of the decree of the Fifteenth of December, was expressly, "*that those who should shew themselves so brutish and so enamoured of their chains as to refuse the restoration of their rights, to renounce liberty and equality, or to preserve, recall, or treat with their Prince or privileged orders, were not entitled to the distinction which France, in other cases, had justly established between Government and People ; and that such a people ought to be treated according to the rigour of war, and of conquest.*" * Here is their love of peace ; here is their aversion to conquest ; here is their respect for the independence of other nations !

It was then, after receiving such explanations as these, after receiving the ultimatum of France, and after M. Chauvelin's credentials had ceased, that he was required to depart. Even after that period, I am almost ashamed to record it, we did not on our part shut the door against other attempts to negotiate, but this transaction was immediately

* Vide Decree of 15th December, 1792.

followed

followed by the declaration of war, proceeding not from England in vindication of its rights, but from France as the completion of the injuries and insults they had offered. And on a war thus originating, can it be doubted, by an English House of Commons, whether the aggression was on the part of this country or of France? or whether the manifest aggression on the part of France was the result of any thing but the principles which characterize the French Revolution?

What then are the resources and subterfuges by which those, who agree with the Learned Gentleman, are prevented from sinking under the force of this simple statement of facts? None but what are found in the insinuation contained in the note from France, that this country had, previous to the transactions to which I have referred, encouraged and supported the combination of other powers directed against them.

Upon this part of the subject, the proofs which contradict such an insinuation, are innumerable. In the first place, the evidence of dates : in the
second

second place, the admission of all the different parties in France ; of the friends of Brissot charging on Robespierre the war with this country, and of the friends of Robespierre charging it on Brissot ; but both acquitting England ; the testimonies of the French Government during the whole interval, since the declaration of Pilnitz, and the pretended treaty of *Pavia* ; the first of which had not the slightest relation to any project or partition of dismemberment ; the second of which I firmly believe to be an absolute fabrication and forgery, and in neither of which, even as they are represented, any reason has been assigned for believing that this country had any share. Even M. Talleyrand himself was sent by the Constitutional King of the French, after the period when that concert, which is now charged, must have existed, if it existed at all, with a letter from the King of France, expressly thanking his Majesty for the neutrality which he had uniformly observed. The same fact is confirmed by the concurring evidence of every person who knew any thing of the plans of the king of Sweden in 1791 ; the only sovereign who, I believe, at that

that time meditated any hostile measures against France, and whose utmost hopes were expressly stated to be, that England would not oppose his intended expedition; by all those, also, who knew anything of the conduct of the Emperor or the King of Prussia; by the clear and decisive testimony of M. Chauvelin himself in his dispatches from hence to the French Government, since published by their authority; by every thing which has occurred since the war; by the publications of Dumourier; by the publications of Brissot; by the facts that have since come to light in America, with respect to the mission of M. Genet; which shew that hostility against this country was decided on the part of France long before the period when M. Chauvelin was sent from hence; besides this, the reduction of our peace establishment in the year 1791, and continued to the subsequent year, is a fact from which the inference is indisputable: a fact, which I am afraid, shews not only that we were not waiting for the occasion of war, but that in our partiality for a pacific system, we had indulged ourselves in a fond and credulous security, which wisdom,

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and discretion would not have dictated. In addition to every other proof it is singular enough, that in a Decree, on the eve of the Declaration of War on the part of France, it is expressly stated, as for the first time, that England was then departing from that system of Neutrality *which she had hitherto observed.*

But, Sir, I will not rest merely on these testimonies or arguments, however strong and decisive. I assert distinctly and positively, and I have the documents in my hand to prove it, that from the middle of the year 1791, upon the first rumour of any measure taken by the Emperor of Germany, and till late in the year 1792, we not only were no parties to any of the projects imputed to the Emperor, but, from the political circumstances in which we then stood with relation to that Court, we wholly declined all communications with him on the subject of France. To Prussia, with whom we were in connection, and still more decisively to Holland, with whom we were in close and intimate correspondence, we uniformly stated our unalterable
 resolu-

resolution to maintain neutrality, and avoid interference in the internal affairs of France, as long as France should refrain from hostile measures against us and our Allies. No Minister of England had any authority to treat with Foreign States, even provisionally, for any warlike concert, till after the battle of Jemappe; till a period subsequent to the repeated provocations which had been offered to us, and subsequent particularly to the Decree of Fraternity of the 19th of November; even then, to what object was it that the concert which we wished to establish, was to be directed? If we had then rightly cast the true character of the French Revolution, I cannot now deny that we should have been better justified in a very different conduct. But it is material to the present argument to declare what that conduct actually was, because it is of itself sufficient to confute all the pretexts by which the advocates of France have so long laboured to perplex the question of Aggression.

At that period, Russia had at length conceived, as well as ourselves, a natural and

just alarm for the Balance of Europe, and applied to us to learn our sentiments on the subject. In our answer to this application we imparted to Russia the principles upon which we then acted, and we communicated this answer to Prussia, with whom we were connected in defensive alliance. I will state shortly the leading part of those principles. A dispatch was sent from Lord Grenville to his Majesty's Minister in Russia, dated the 29th of December, 1792, stating a desire to have an explanation set on foot on the subject of the War with France. I will read the material parts of it.

“The two leading points on which such explanation will naturally turn, are the line of conduct to be followed previous to the commencement of hostilities, and with a view, if possible, to avert them; and the nature and amount of the forces which the powers engaged in this concert might be enabled to use, supposing such extremities unavoidable.

“With

“ With respect to the first, it appears on the
 “ whole, subject however to future consideration
 “ and discussion with the other Powers, that the
 “ most adviseable step to be taken would be, that
 “ sufficient explanation should be had with the
 “ Powers at War with France, in order to en-
 “ able those not hitherto engaged in the War to
 “ propose to that Country terms of Peace. That
 “ these terms should be, the withdrawing their
 “ arms within the limits of the French territory;
 “ the abandoning their conquests; the rescinding
 “ any acts injurious to the Sovereignty or Rights
 “ of any other Nations, and the giving in some
 “ public and unequivocal manner a pledge of
 “ their intention no longer to foment troubles,
 “ or to excite disturbances against other Go-
 “ vernments. In return for these stipulations,
 “ the different Powers of Europe, who should
 “ be parties to this measure, might engage to
 “ abandon all measures, or views of hostility
 “ against France, or interference in their internal
 “ affairs, and to maintain a correspondence and
 “ intercourse of Amity with the existing Powers
 “ in that Country, with whom such a Treaty
 “ may

“ may be concluded. If, on the result of this
 “ proposal so made by the Powers acting in
 “ concert, these terms should not be accepted
 “ by France, or being accepted, should not be
 “ satisfactorily performed, the different Powers
 “ might then engage themselves to each other
 “ to enter into active measures, for the purpose
 “ of obtaining the ends in view ; and it may be
 “ to be considered, whether, in such case, they
 “ might not reasonably look to some indemnity
 “ for the expences and hazards to which they
 “ would necessarily be exposed.”

The dispatch then proceeded to the second
 point, that of the Forces to be employed, on
 which it is unnecessary now to speak.

Now, Sir, I would really ask any person who
 has been, from the beginning, the most desirous of
 avoiding hostilities, whether it is possible to con-
 ceive any measure to be adopted in the situation
 in which we then stood, which could more evi-
 dently demonstrate our desire, after repeated
 provocations, to preserve Peace, on any terms
 consistent

consistent with our safety; or whether any sentiment could now be suggested which would have more plainly marked our moderation, forbearance, and sincerity? In saying this I am not challenging the applause and approbation of my Country, because I must now confess that we were too slow in anticipating that danger of which we had, perhaps, even then sufficient experience, though far short, indeed, of that which we now possess, and that we might even then have seen, what facts have since but too incontestably proved, that nothing but vigorous and open hostility can afford complete and adequate security against Revolutionary principles, while they retain a proportion of power sufficient to furnish the means of War.

I will enlarge no farther on the Origin of the War. I have read and detailed to you a system which was in itself a declaration of War against all Nations, which was so intended, and which has been so applied, which has been exemplified in the extreme peril and hazard of almost all who for a moment have trusted to Treaty, and which

has not at this hour overwhelmed Europe in one indiscriminate mass of ruin, only because we have not indulged, to a fatal extremity, that disposition, which we have however indulged too far; because we have not consented to trust to profession and compromise, rather than to our own valour and exertion, for security against a system, from which we never shall be delivered till either the principle is extinguished, or till its strength is exhausted.

I might, Sir, if I found it necessary, enter into much detail upon this part of the subject; but at present I only beg leave to express my readiness at any time to enter upon it, when either my own strength, or the patience of the House will admit of it; but, I say, without distinction, against every Nation in Europe, and against some out of Europe, the Principle has been faithfully applied. You cannot look at the Map of Europe, and lay your hand upon that Country against which France has not either declared an open and aggressive War, or violated some positive

tive Treaty, or broken some recognized principle of the Law of Nations.

This subject may be divided into various periods. There were some acts of hostility committed previous to the war with this country, and very little indeed subsequent to that declaration, which abjured the love of conquest. The attack upon the Papal State, by the seizure of Avignon, in 1791, was accompanied with specimens of all the vile arts and perfidy that ever disgraced a revolution. Avignon was separated from its lawful sovereign, with whom not even the pretence of quarrel existed, and forcibly incorporated in the tyranny of One and Indivisible France. The same system led, in the same year, to an aggression against the whole German Empire, by the seizure of Porentrui, part of the dominions of the Bishop of Basle. Afterwards, in 1792, unpreceded by any declaration of war, or any cause of hostility, and in direct violation of the solemn pledge to abstain from conquest, they made war against the King of Sardinia, by the seizure of Savoy, for the purpose

of incorporating it, in like manner, with France. In the same year, they had proceeded to the declaration of war against Austria, against Prussia, and against the German Empire, in which they have been justified only on the ground of a rooted hostility, combination, and league of sovereigns, for the dismemberment of France. I say, that some of the documents, brought to support this pretence, are spurious and false; I say, that even in those that are not so, there is not one word to prove the charge principally relied upon, that of an intention to effect the dismemberment of France, or to impose upon it, by force, any particular constitution. I say, that as far as we have been able to trace what passed at Pilnitz, the declaration there signed referred to the imprisonment of Louis XVI. its immediate view was to effect his deliverance, if a concert sufficiently extensive could be formed with other sovereigns, for that purpose. It left the internal state of France to be decided by the king restored to his liberty, with the free consent of the states of his kingdom, and it did not contain

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one word relative to the dismemberment of France.

In the subsequent discussions, which took place in 1792, and which embraced at the same time, all the other points of jealousy which had arisen between the two Countries, the declaration of Pilnitz was referred to, and explained on the part of Austria in a manner precisely conformable to what I have now stated; and the amicable explanations which took place, both on this subject and on all the matters in dispute, will be found in the official correspondence between the two Courts which has been made public; and it will be found that as long as the negotiation continued to be conducted through M. Delessart, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, there was a great prospect that those discussions would be amicably terminated; but it is notorious, and has since been clearly proved on the authority of *Brissot* himself, that the violent party in France considered such an issue of the negotiation as likely to be fatal to their projects, and thought, to use his own words, that "war

was necessary to consolidate the revolution."

For the exprefs purpose of producing the war, they excited a popular tumult in Paris; they infisted upon and obtained the dismissal of M. Delessart. A new Minister was appointed in his room, the tone of the negociation was immediately changed, and an ultimatum was sent to the Emperor, similar to that which was afterwards sent to this country, affording him no satisfaction on his just grounds of complaint, and requiring him, under those circumstances, to disarm. The first events of the contest proved how much more France was prepared for war than Austria, and afford a strong confirmation of the proposition which I maintain; that no offensive intention was entertained on the part of the latter power.

War was then declared against Austria; a war which I state to be a war of aggression on the part of France. The King of Prussia had declared, that he should consider war against the Emperor or Empire as war against himself. He had declared, that, as a Co-estate of the Empire, he was deter-

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mined to defend their rights ; that, as an Ally of the Emperor, he would support him to the utmost against any attack ; and that, for the sake of his own dominions, he felt himself called upon to resist the progress of French principles, and to maintain the balance of power in Europe. With this notice before them, France declared war upon the Emperor, and the war with Prussia was the necessary consequence of this aggression, both against the Emperor and the Empire.

The war against the king of Sardinia follows next. The declaration of that war was the seizure of Savoy, by an invading army ;—and on what ground ? On that which has been stated already. They had found out, by some light of nature, that the Rhine and the Alps were the natural limits of France. Upon that ground Savoy was seized ; and Savoy was also incorporated with France.

Here finishes the history of the wars in which France was engaged, antecedent to the war with Great Britain, with Holland, and with

with Spain. With respect to Spain, we have seen nothing which leads us to suspect, that either attachment to religion, or the ties of consanguinity, or regard to the ancient system of Europe, was likely to induce that Court to connect itself in offensive war against France. The war was evidently and incontestably begun by France against Spain.

The case of Holland is so fresh in every man's recollection, and so connected with the immediate causes of the war with this country, that it cannot require one word of observation. What shall I say then on the case of Portugal? I cannot indeed say, that France ever declared war against that country, I can hardly say even that she ever made war, but she required them to make a treaty of peace, as if they had been at war: she obliged them to purchase that treaty; she broke it as soon as it was purchased, and she had originally no other ground of complaint than this,—that Portugal had performed, though inadequately, the engagements of its ancient defensive alliance with this country, in the character of an auxiliary;

auxiliary; a conduct which cannot of itself make any power a principal in a war.

I have now enumerated all the nations at war at that period; with the exception only of Naples. It can hardly be necessary to call to the recollection of the House, the characteristic feature of revolutionary principles which was shewn, even at this early period, in the personal insult offered to the King of Naples, by the Commander of a French Squadron, riding uncontrouled in the Mediterranean, and (while our Fleets were yet unarmed) threatening destruction to all the coast of Italy.

It was not till a considerably later period, that almost all the other Nations of Europe found themselves equally involved in actual hostility: but it is not a little material to the whole of my argument, compared with the statement of the Learned Gentleman, and with that contained in the French note, to examine at what period this hostility extended itself. It extended itself, in the course of 1796, to the States of Italy which

had

had hitherto been exempted from it. In 1797 it had ended in the destruction of most of them; it had ended in the virtual deposition of the King of Sardinia; it had ended in the conversion of Genoa and Tuscany into Democratic Republics; it had ended in the revolution of Venice, in the violation of treaties with the new Venitian Republic; and finally, in transferring that very Republic, the creature and vassal of France, to the Dominion of Austria.

I observe from the gestures of some Honourable Gentlemen, that they think we are precluded from the use of any argument founded on this last transaction. I already hear them saying, that it was as criminal in Austria to receive as it was in France to give. I am far from defending or palliating the conduct of Austria upon this occasion. But because Austria, unable at last to contend with the arms of France, was forced to accept an unjust and insufficient indemnification for the conquests France had made from it, are we to be debarred from stating what, on the part of France, was not merely

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an unjust acquisition, but an act of the grossest and most aggravated perfidy and cruelty, and one of the most striking specimens of that system which has been uniformly and indiscriminately applied to all the countries which France has had within its grasp. This only can be said in vindication of France, (and it is still more a vindication of Austria) that, practically speaking, if there is any part of this transaction for which Venice itself has reason to be grateful, it can only be for the permission to exchange the embraces of French fraternity for what is called the despotism of Vienna.

Let these facts, and these dates, be compared with what we have heard. The Honourable Gentleman has told us, and the Author of the Note from France has told us also, that all the French conquests were produced by the operations of the Allies. It was, when they were pressed on all sides, when their own Territory was in danger, when their own Independence was in question, when the Confederacy appeared too strong; it was then they

used the means with which their power and their courage furnished them; and, "attacked upon all sides, they carried every where their defensive arms."* I do not wish to misrepresent the Learned Gentleman, but I understood him to speak of this sentiment with approbation: the sentiment itself is this, that if a nation is unjustly attacked in any one quarter by others, she cannot stop to consider by whom, but must find means of strength in other quarters, no matter where; and is justified in attacking, in her turn, those with whom she is at Peace, and from whom she has received no species of provocation.

Sir, I hope I have already proved, in a great measure, that no such attack was made upon France; but, if it was made, I maintain that the whole ground on which that argument is founded cannot be tolerated. In the name of the Laws of Nature and Nations, in the name of every thing that is sacred and honourable, I

* Vide M. Talleyrand's Note.

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demur to that plea, and I tell that Honourable and Learned Gentleman, that he would do well, to look again into the Law of Nations, before he ventures to come to this House, to give the sanction of his authority to so dreadful and execrable a system.

[Mr. Erskine here said, across the House, that he had never maintained such a proposition.]

Mr. Pitt.—I certainly understood this to be distinctly the tenor of the Learned Gentleman's argument, but as he tells me he did not use it, I take it for granted he did not intend to use it; I rejoice that he did not; but at least then I have a right to expect, that the Learned Gentleman should now transfer to the French Note some of the indignation which he has hitherto lavished upon the declarations of this Country. This principle, which the Learned Gentleman disclaims, the French Note avows; and I contend, without the fear of contradiction, it is the principle upon which France has uniformly

acted. But while the Learned Gentleman disclaims this proposition, he certainly will admit, that he has himself asserted, and maintained in the whole course of his argument, that the pressure of the War upon France, imposed upon her the necessity of those exertions which produced most of the Enormities of the Revolution, and most of the Enormities practised against the other countries of Europe. The House will recollect, that, in the year 1796, when all these horrors in Italy were beginning, which are the strongest illustrations of the general character of the French Revolution, we had begun that negociation to which the Learned Gentleman has referred. England then possessed numerous conquests; England, though not having at that time had the advantage of three of her most splendid victories, England, even then, appeared undisputed Mistress of the Sea; England, having then ingrossed the whole wealth of the Colonial World; England, having lost nothing of its original possessions; England then comes forward, proposing general Peace, and offering—what? offering the surrender of all that it had acquired, in
order

order to obtain — what? not the dismemberment, not the partition of ancient France, but the return of a part of those conquests, no one of which could be retained, but in direct contradiction to that original and solemn pledge which is now referred to, as the proof of the just and moderate disposition of the French Republic. Yet, even this offer was not sufficient to procure Peace, or to arrest the progress of France in her *defensive operations* against other unoffending Countries. From the pages, however, of the Learned Gentleman's Pamphlet (which, after all its Editions, is now fresher in his memory than in that of any other person in this House, or in the Country), he is furnished with an argument, on the result of the negociation, on which he appears confidently to rely. He maintains, that the single point on which the Negociation was broken off, was the question of the possession of the Austrian Netherlands; and that it is, therefore, on that ground only, that the War has, since that time, been continued. When this subject was before under discussion, I stated, and I shall state again, (not-with-

withstanding the Learned Gentleman's accusation of my having endeavoured to shift the question from its true point) that the question, then at issue, was not, whether the Netherlands should, in fact, be restored ; though even on that question I am not, like the Learned Gentleman, unprepared to give any opinion, I am ready to say, that to leave that territory in the possession of France would be obviously dangerous to the interests of this Country, and is inconsistent with the policy which it has uniformly pursued, at every period in which it has concerned itself in the general system of the Continent ; but it was not on the decision of this question of expediency and policy, that the issue of the Negotiation then turned ; what was required of us by France was, not merely that we should acquiesce in her retaining the Netherlands, but, that, as a *preliminary* to all treaty, and before entering upon the discussion of terms, we should recognize the principle, that whatever France, in time of War, had *annexed* to the Republic must remain inseparable for ever, and could not become the sub-

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ject of Negociation. I say, that, in refusing such a preliminary, we were only resisting the claim of France, to arrogate to itself the power of controlling, by its own separate and municipal acts, the rights and interests of other countries, and moulding, at its discretion, a new and general code of the Law of Nations.

In reviewing the issue of this Negociation, it is important to observe, that France, who began by abjuring a love of conquest, was desired to give up nothing of her own, not even to give up all that she had conquered; that it was offered to her to receive back all that had been conquered from her; and when she rejected the negociation for peace upon these grounds, are we then to be told of the unrelenting hostility of the Combined Powers, for which France was to revenge itself upon other countries, and which is to justify the subversion of every established government, and the destruction of property, religion, and domestic comfort, from one end of Italy to the other? Such was the effect of the war against Modena, against Genoa, against

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against Tuscany, against Venice, against Rome, and against Naples, all of which she engaged in, or prosecuted, subsequent to this very period.

After this, in the year 1797, Austria had made peace, England and its Ally, Portugal, (from whom we could expect little active assistance, but whom we felt it our duty to defend) alone remained in the war. In that situation, under the pressure of necessity, which I shall not disguise, we made another attempt to negotiate. In 1797, Prussia, Spain, Austria, Naples, having successively made peace, the Princes of Italy having been destroyed, France having surrounded itself, in almost every part in which it is not surrounded by the sea, with Revolutionary Republics, England made another offer of a different nature. It was not now a demand that France should restore any thing, Austria having made a peace upon her own terms, England had nothing to require with regard to her Allies, she asked no restitution of the dominions added to France in Europe. So far from retaining any thing French out of Europe,

we freely offered them all, demanding only, as a poor compensation, to retain a part of what we had acquired by arms, from Holland, then identified with France. This proposal also, Sir, was proudly refused, in a way which the Learned Gentleman himself has not attempted to justify, indeed of which he has spoken with detestation. I wish, since he has not finally abjured his duty in this House, that that detestation had been stated earlier, that he had mixed his own voice with the general voice of his country on the result of that negotiation.

Let us look at the conduct of France immediately subsequent to this period. She had spurned at the offers of Great Britain, she had reduced her continental enemies to the necessity of accepting a precarious peace, she had (in spite of those pledges repeatedly made and uniformly violated) surrounded herself by new conquests, on every part of her frontier but one; that one was Switzerland. The first effect of being relieved from the war with Austria, of being secured against all fears of continental

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invasion

invasion on the ancient territory of France, was their unprovoked attack against this unoffending and devoted country. This was one of the scenes which satisfied even those who were the most incredulous, that France had thrown off the mask, "*if indeed she had ever worn it.*" * It collected, in one view, many of the characteristic features of that revolutionary system which I have endeavoured to trace, the perfidy which alone rendered their arms successful, the pretext of which they availed themselves to produce division and prepare the entrance of Jacobinism in that country, the proposal of armistice, one of the known and regular engines of the Revolution, which was, as usual, the immediate prelude to military execution, attended with cruelty and barbarity, of which there are few examples: all these are known to the world. The country they attacked was one which had long been the faithful ally of France, which, instead of giving cause of jealousy to any other power, had been, for ages, proverbial for the simplicity and

* Vide Speeches at the Whig-Club.

innocence of its manners, and which had acquired and preserved the esteem of all the nations of Europe; which had almost, by the common consent of mankind, been exempted from the sound of war, and marked out as a Land of *Goshen*, safe and untouched in the midst of surrounding calamities.

Look then at the fate of Switzerland, at the circumstances which led to its destruction, add this instance to the catalogue of aggression against all Europe; and then tell me, whether the system I have described has not been prosecuted with an unrelenting spirit, which cannot be subdued in adversity, which cannot be appeased in prosperity, which neither solemn professions, nor the general law of nations, nor the obligation of treaties, (whether previous to the revolution or subsequent to it) could restrain from the subversion of every state into which, either by force or fraud, their arms could penetrate. Then tell me, whether the disasters of Europe are to be charged upon the provocation of this country and its allies, or on the inherent principle

principle of the French Revolution, of which the natural result produced so much misery and carnage in France, and carried desolation and terror over so large a portion of the world.

Sir, much as I have now stated I have not finished the catalogue. America almost as much as Switzerland, perhaps, contributed to that change which has taken place in the minds of those who were originally partial to the principles of the French Government. The hostility against America followed a long course of neutrality adhered to, under the strongest provocations, or rather of repeated compliances to France, with which we might well have been dissatisfied. It was on the face of it, unjust and wanton; and it was accompanied by those instances of sordid corruption which shocked and disgusted even the enthusiastic admirers of revolutionary purity, and threw a new light on the genius of Revolutionary Government.

After this, it remains only shortly to remind Gentlemen of the aggression against Egypt, not omitting,

omitting, however, to notice the capture of Malta, in the way to Egypt. Inconsiderable as that island may be thought, compared with the scenes we have witnessed, let it be remembered, that it is an Island of which the government had long been recognized by every state of Europe, against which France pretended no cause of war, and whose independance was as dear to itself and as sacred as that of any country in Europe. It was in fact not unimportant from its local situation to the other powers of Europe, but in proportion as any man may diminish its importance, the instance will only serve the more to illustrate and confirm the proposition which I have maintained.—The all-searching eye of the French Revolution looks to every part of Europe, and every quarter of the World, in which can be found an object either of acquisition or plunder. Nothing is too great for the temerity of its ambition, nothing too small or insignificant for the grasp of its rapacity. From hence Bonaparte and his Army proceeded to Egypt. The attack was made, pretences were held out to the Natives of that Country in the name of the French King, whom they had murdered;

dered ; they pretended to have the approbation of the Grand Seignior, whose Territories they were violating ; their project was carried on under the profession of a zeal for Mahometanism ; it was carried on by proclaiming that France had been reconciled to the Mussulman Faith, had abjured that of Christianity, or as he in his impious language termed it, of *the Sect of the Messiah*.

The only plea which they have since held out to colour this atrocious Invasion of a neutral and friendly territory, is that it was the road to attack the English power in India. It is most unquestionably true, that this was one and a principal cause of this unparalleled outrage ; but another, and an equally substantial cause, (as appears by their own statements,) was the division and partition of the territories of what they thought a falling Power. It is impossible to dismiss this subject without observing that this attack against Egypt was accompanied by an attack upon the British Possessions in India, made on true revolutionary principles. In Europe, the propagation of the principles of
France

France had uniformly prepared the way for the progress of its arms. To India, the lovers of Peace had sent the Messengers of Jacobinism, for the purpose of inculcating War in those distant regions, on Jacobin principles, and of forming Jacobin Clubs, which they actually succeeded in establishing, and which in most respects resembled the European model, but which were distinguished by this peculiarity, that they were required to swear in one breath, *hatred to Tyranny, the love of Liberty, and the destruction of all Kings and Sovereigns, except the good and faithful Ally of the French Republic, CITIZEN TIPPOO.*

What then was the nature of this system? Was it any thing but what I have stated it to be? an insatiable love of aggrandizement, an implacable spirit of destruction against all the civil and religious institutions of every country. This is the first moving and acting spirit of the French Revolution; this is the spirit which animated it at its birth, and this is the spirit which will not desert it till the moment of its dissolution,

tion, " which grew with its growth, which strengthened with its strength," but which has not abated under its misfortunes, nor declined in its decay ; it has been invariably the same in every period, operating more or less, according as accident or circumstances might assist it ; but it has been inherent in the Revolution in all its stages, it has equally belonged to Brissot, to Robespierre, to Tallien, to Reubel, to Barras, and to every one of the Leaders of the Directory, but to none more than to Bonapate, in whom now all their powers are united. What are its characters ? Can it be accident that produced them ? No, it is only from the alliance of the most horrid principles, with the most horrid means, that such miseries could have been brought upon Europe. It is this paradox which we must always keep in mind when we are discussing any question relative to the effects of the French Revolution. Groaning under every degree of misery, the victim of its own crimes, and as I once before expressed it in this House, asking pardon of God and of Man for the miseries which it has brought upon itself and others,

France

France still retains, (while it has neither left means of comfort, nor almost of subsistence to its own inhabitants,) new and unexampled means of annoyance and destruction against all the other Powers of Europe.

Its first fundamental principle was to bribe the poor against the rich, by proposing to transfer into new hands, on the delusive notion of Equality, and in breach of every principle of justice, the whole property of the Country; the practical application of this principle was to devote the whole of that Property to indiscriminate plunder, and to make it the foundation of a Revolutionary system of Finance, productive in proportion to the misery and desolation which it created. It has been accompanied by an unwearied spirit of Profelytism, diffusing itself over all the Nations of the Earth; a spirit which can apply itself to all circumstances and all situations, which can furnish a list of grievances, and hold out a promise of redress equally to all nations, which inspired the teachers of French Liberty with the hope of alike recommending

mending themselves to those who live under the feudal code of the German Empire; to the various States of Italy, under all their different institutions; to the old Republicans of Holland, and to the new Republicans of America; to the Catholic of Ireland, whom it was to deliver from Protestant usurpation; to the Protestant of Switzerland, whom it was to deliver from Popish superstition; and to the Mussulman of Egypt, whom it was to deliver from Christian persecution; to the remote Indian, blindly bigotted to his ancient institutions; and to the Natives of Great Britain, enjoying the perfection of practical freedom, and justly attached to their constitution, from the joint result of habit, of reason, and of experience. The last and distinguishing feature is a perfidy which nothing can bind, which no tie of Treaty, no sense of the principles generally received among Nations, no obligation, human or divine, can restrain. Thus qualified, thus armed for destruction, the genius of the French Revolution marched forth, the terror and dismay of the World. Every Nation has in its turn been the witness, many have been

the victims of its principles, and it is left for us to decide, whether we will compromise with such a danger, while we have yet resources to supply the sinews of War, while the heart and spirit of the Country is yet unbroken, and while we have the means of calling forth and supporting a powerful co-operation in Europe.

Much more might be said on this part of the subject; but if what I have said already is a faithful, though only an imperfect sketch of those excesses and outrages, which even History itself will hereafter be unable fully to represent and record, and a just representation of the principle and source from which they originated; will any man say that we ought to accept a precarious security against so tremendous a danger? much more will he pretend, after the experience of all that has passed, in the different stages of the French Revolution, that we ought to be deterred from probing this great question to the bottom, and from examining, without ceremony or disguise, whether the change which has recently taken place in France is sufficient now to give security, not

against a common danger, but against such a danger as that which I have described.

In examining this part of the subject, let it be remembered, that there is one other characteristic of the French Revolution, as striking as its dreadful and destructive principles, I mean the instability of its government, which has been of itself sufficient to destroy all reliance, if any such reliance could, at any time, have been placed on the good faith of any of its rulers. Such has been the incredible rapidity with which the revolutions in France have succeeded each other, that I believe the names of those who have successively exercised absolute power, under the pretence of Liberty, are to be numbered by the years of the revolution, and each of the new constitutions, which under the same pretence, has, in its turn, been imposed by force on France, all of which alike were founded upon principles which professed to be universal, and was intended to be established and perpetuated among all the nations of the earth.—Each of these will be found,

found, upon an average, to have had about two years, as the period of its duration.

Under this revolutionary system, accompanied with this perpetual fluctuation and change, both in the form of the government and in the persons of the rulers, what is the security which has hitherto existed, and what new security is now offered? Before an answer is given to this question, let me sum up the history of all the revolutionary governments of France, and of their characters in relation to other powers, in words more emphatical than any which I could use—the memorable words pronounced, on the eve of this last constitution, by the orator* who was selected to report to an assembly, surrounded by a file of grenadiers, the new form of liberty which it was destined to enjoy under the auspices of General Bonaparte. From this reporter, the mouth and organ of the

* Vide Speech of Boulay de la Meurthe, in the Council of Five Hundred, at St. Cloud, 19th Brumaire, (9th Nov.) 1799.

new government, we learn this important lesson: “ *It is easy to conceive, why peace*
 “ *was not concluded before the establishment*
 “ *of the constitutional government. The only*
 “ *government which then existed, described itself*
 “ *as revolutionary; it was in fact only the ty-*
 “ *ranny of a few men who were soon overthrown*
 “ *by others, and it consequently presented no sta-*
 “ *bility of principles or of views, no security*
 “ *either with respect to men or with respect to*
 “ *things.*

“ *It should seem that that stability and that*
 “ *security ought to have existed from the esta-*
 “ *blishment, and as the effect, of the constitu-*
 “ *tional system; and yet they did not exist more,*
 “ *perhaps even less, than they had done before.*
 “ *In truth, we did make some partial treaties;*
 “ *we signed a continental peace, and a gene-*
 “ *ral congress was held to confirm it; but these*
 “ *treaties, these diplomatic conferences, appear*
 “ *to have been the source of a new war, more*
 “ *inveterate and more bloody than before.*

Refire

“ Before the 18th Fructidor (4th September)
 “ of the 5th year, the French government exhi-
 “ bited to foreign nations so uncertain an exist-
 “ ance, that they refused to treat with it. After
 “ this great event, the whole power was absorbed
 “ in the Directory; the legislative body can hard-
 “ ly be said to have existed; treaties of peace
 “ were broken, and war carried every where,
 “ without that body having any share in those
 “ measures. The same Directory, after having
 “ intimidated all Europe, and destroyed, at its
 “ pleasure, several governments, neither knowing
 “ how to make peace or war, or how even to
 “ establish itself, was overturned by a breath, on
 “ the 13th Prairial (18th June), to make room
 “ for other men, influenced perhaps by different
 “ views, or who might be governed by different
 “ principles.

“ Judging, then, only from notorious facts,
 “ the French government must be considered, as
 “ exhibiting nothing fixed, neither in respect to
 “ men or to things.” Here, then, is the picture,
 down to the period of the last revolution, of
 the

the state of France, under all its successive governments !

Having taken a view of what it was, let us now examine what it is. In the first place, we see, as has been truly stated, a change in the description and form of the sovereign authority ; a supreme power is placed at the head of this nominal Republic, with a more open avowal of military despotism than at any former period ; with a more open and undisguised abandonment of the names and pretences under which that despotism long attempted to conceal itself. The different institutions, republican in their form and appearance, which were before the instruments of that despotism, are now annihilated ; they have given way to the absolute power of one man, concentrating in himself all the authority of the state, and differing from other monarchs only in this, that (as my Honourable Friend * truly stated it) he wields a sword instead of a sceptre. What then is the confidence

* Mr. Canning.

we are to derive either from the frame of the government, or from the character and past conduct of the person who is now the absolute ruler of France?

Had we seen a man of whom we had no previous knowledge suddenly invested with the sovereign authority of the country; invested with the power of taxation, with the power of the sword, the power of war and peace, the unlimited power of commanding the resources, of disposing of the lives and fortunes of every man in France; if we had seen, at the same moment, all the inferior machinery of the revolution, which, under the variety of successive shocks, had kept the system in motion, still remaining intire, all that, by requisition and plunder, had given activity to the revolutionary system of finance, and had furnished the means of creating an army, by converting every man, who was of age to bear arms, into a soldier, not for the defence of his own country but for the sake of carrying the war into the country of the

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enemy;

enemy ; if we had seen all the subordinate instruments of Jacobin power subsisting in their full force, and retaining (to use the French phrase) all their original organization ; and had then observed this single change in the conduct of their affairs, that there was now one man, with no rival to thwart his measures, no colleague to divide his powers, no council to controul his operations, no liberty of speaking or writing, no expression of public opinion to check or influence his conduct ; under such circumstances, should we be wrong to pause, or wait for the evidence of facts and experience, before we consented to trust our safety to the forbearance of a single man, in such a situation, and to relinquish those means of defence which have hitherto carried us safe through all the storms of the revolution ? if we were to ask what are the principles and character of this stranger, to whom Fortune has suddenly committed the concerns of a great and powerful nation ?

But

But is this the actual state of the present question? Are we talking of a stranger of whom we have heard nothing? No, Sir: we have heard of him; we, and Europe, and the world, have heard both of him and of the satellites by whom he is surrounded, and it is impossible to discuss fairly the propriety of any answer which could be returned to his overtures of negotiation, without taking into consideration the inferences to be drawn from his personal character and conduct. I know it is the fashion with some gentlemen to represent any reference to topics of this nature as invidious and irritating; but the truth is, that they arise unavoidably out of the very nature of the question. Would it have been possible for Ministers to discharge their duty, in offering their advice to their Sovereign, either for accepting or declining negotiation, without taking into their account the reliance to be placed on the disposition and the principles of the person, on whose disposition and principles the security to be obtained by treaty must, in the present circumstances, principally depend: or

enemy; if we had seen all the subordinate instruments of Jacobin power subsisting in their full force, and retaining (to use the French phrase) all their original organization; and had then observed this single change in the conduct of their affairs, that there was now one man, with no rival to thwart his measures, no colleague to divide his powers, no council to controul his operations, no liberty of speaking or writing, no expression of public opinion to check or influence his conduct; under such circumstances, should we be wrong to pause, or wait for the evidence of facts and experience, before we consented to trust our safety to the forbearance of a single man, in such a situation, and to relinquish those means of defence which have hitherto carried us safe through all the storms of the revolution? if we were to ask what are the principles and character of this stranger, to whom Fortune has suddenly committed the concerns of a great and powerful nation?

But

But is this the actual state of the present question? Are we talking of a stranger of whom we have heard nothing? No, Sir: we have heard of him; we, and Europe, and the world, have heard both of him and of the satelites by whom he is surrounded, and it is impossible to discuss fairly the propriety of any answer which could be returned to his overtures of negociation, without taking into consideration the inferences to be drawn from his personal character and conduct. I know it is the fashion with some gentlemen to represent any reference to topics of this nature as invidious and irritating; but the truth is, that they arise unavoidably out of the very nature of the question. Would it have been possible for Ministers to discharge their duty, in offering their advice to their Sovereign, either for accepting or declining negociation, without taking into their account the reliance to be placed on the disposition and the principles of the person, on whose disposition and principles the security to be obtained by treaty must, in the present circumstances, principally depend: or

would they act honestly or candidly towards Parliament and towards the Country, if, having been guided by these considerations, they forbore to state publicly and distinctly, the real grounds which have influenced their decision; and if, from a false delicacy and groundless timidity, they purposely declined an examination of a point, the most essential towards enabling Parliament to form a just determination on so important a subject?

What opinion, then, are we led to form of the pretensions of the Consul to those particular qualities for which, in the Official Note, his personal character is represented to us as the surest pledge of peace? we are told this is his second attempt at general pacification. Let us see, for a moment, how this attempt has been conducted. There is, indeed, as the Learned Gentleman has said, a word in the first Declaration which refers to general peace, and which states this to be the second time in which the Consul has endeavoured to accomplish that object. We thought fit, for the

reasons

reasons which have been assigned, to decline altogether the proposal of treating, under the present circumstances, but we, at the same time, expressly stated, that, whenever the moment for treaty should arrive, we would in no case treat, but in conjunction with our Allies. Our general refusal to negotiate at the present moment does not prevent the Consul from renewing his overtures; but are they renewed for the purpose of general pacification? Though he had hinted at general peace in the terms of his first Note; though we had shewn, by our answer, that we deemed negotiation, even for general peace, at this moment, inadmissible; though we added, that, even at any future period, we would treat only in conjunction with our Allies; what was the proposal contained in his last Note?—to treat for a separate peace between Great Britain and France.

Such was the second attempt to effect *general pacification*: a proposal for a *separate* treaty with great Britain.—What had been the first?

first? the conclusion of a *separate* treaty with Austria; and there are two anecdotes connected with the conclusion of this treaty, which are sufficient to illustrate the disposition of this pacification of Europe. This very treaty of Campo Formio was ostentatiously professed to be concluded with the Emperor for the purpose of enabling Bonaparte to take the command of the Army of England, and to dictate a separate peace with this Country on the banks of the Thames. But there is this additional circumstance, singular beyond all conception, considering that we are now referred to the treaty of Campo Formio as a proof of the personal disposition of the Consul to general peace; he sent his two confidential and chosen friends, *Berthier* and *Monge*, charged to communicate to the Directory this treaty of Campo Formio; to announce to them, that one enemy was humbled, that the war with Austria was terminated, and, therefore, that now was the moment to prosecute their operations against this Country; they used, on this occasion, the memorable words, “ *the Kingdom*
“ *of*

of Great Britain and the French Republic cannot exist together." This, I say, was the solemn declaration of the deputies and ambassadors of Bonaparte himself, offering to the Directory the first fruits of this first attempt at general pacification.

So much for his disposition towards general pacification; let us look next at the part he has taken in the different stages of the French revolution, and let us then judge whether we are to look to him, as the security against revolutionary principles; let us determine what reliance we can place on his engagements with other countries, when we see how he has observed his engagements to his own. When the constitution of the third year was established under Barras, that constitution was imposed by the arms of Bonaparte, then commanding the Army of the Triumverate, in Paris. To that constitution he then swore fidelity. How often he has repeated the same oath I know not, but twice, at least, we know that he has not only repeated

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it himself, but tendered it to others, under circumstances too striking not to be stated,

Sir, the House cannot have forgotten the revolution of the 4th of September, which produced the dismissal of Lord Malmfbury from Lisle. How was that revolution procured? It was procured chiefly by the promise of Bonaparte (in the name of his army), decidedly to support the Directory in those measures which led to the infringement and violation of every thing that the authors of the constitution of 1795, or its adherents, could consider as fundamental, and which established a system of despotism inferior only to that now realized in his own person. Immediately before this event, in the midst of the desolation and bloodshed of Italy, he had received the sacred present of new banners from the Directory; he delivered them to his army with this exhortation: " Let us swear, fellow-soldiers, by the manes of the patriots who have died by our side, eternal hatred to the enemies of the constitution of the
" third

‘ third year.’ That very constitution which he soon after enabled the Directory to violate, and which, at the head of his grenadiers, he has now finally destroyed. Sir, that oath was again renewed, in the midst of that very scene to which I have last referred; the oath of fidelity to the constitution of the third year was administered to all the members of the Assembly then sitting (under the terror of the bayonet), as the solemn preparation for the business of the day; and the morning was ushered in with swearing attachment to the constitution, that the evening might close with its destruction.

If we carry our views out of France, and look at the dreadful catalogue of all the breaches of treaty, all the acts of perfidy at which I have only glanced, and which are precisely commensurate with the number of treaties which the republic have made; (for I have sought in vain for any one which it has made and which it has not broken) if we trace the history of them all

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from the beginning of the revolution to the present time, or if we select those which have been accompanied by the most atrocious cruelty, and marked the most strongly with the characteristic features of the revolution, the name of Bonaparte will be found allied to more of them than that of any other that can be handed down in the history of the crimes and miseries of the last ten years. His name will be recorded with the horrors committed in Italy, in the memorable campaign of 1796 and 1797, in the Milanese, in Genoa, in Modena, in Tuscany, in Rome, and in Venice.

His entrance into Lombardy was announced by a solemn proclamation, issued on the 27th of April, 1796, which terminated with these words:
*“ Nations of Italy! the French army is come to
 “ break your chains, the French are the friends
 “ of the people in every country, your religion,
 “ your property, your customs, shall be respected.”*
 This was followed by a second proclamation,
 dated

dated from Milan 20th of May and signed “*Bonaparte*,” in these terms: “*Respect for property and personal security. Respect for the religion of countries, these are the sentiments of the government of the French republic, and of the army of Italy. The French victorious consider the nations of Lombardy as their brothers.*” In testimony of this fraternity, and to fulfill the solemn pledge of respecting property, this very proclamation imposed on the Milanese a provisional contribution to the amount of twenty millions of livres, or near one million sterling, and successive exactions were afterwards levied on that single state to the amount, in the whole, of near six millions sterling. The regard to religion and to the customs of the country was manifested with the same scrupulous fidelity. The churches were given up to indiscriminate plunder. Every religious and charitable fund, every public treasure, was confiscated. The country was made the scene of every species of disorder and rapine. The priests, the established form of worship, all

the objects of religious reverence, were openly insulted by the French troops; at *Pavia* particularly the tomb of *St. Augustin*, which the inhabitants were accustomed to view with peculiar veneration, was mutilated and defaced; this last provocation having roused the resentment of the people they flew to arms, surrounded the French garrison and took them prisoners, but carefully abstained from offering any violence to a single soldier. In revenge for this conduct, *Bonaparte*, then on his march to the *Mincio*, suddenly returned, collected his troops, and carried the extremity of military execution over the country; he burnt the town of *Benafco* and massacred eight hundred of its inhabitants; he marched to *Pavia*, took it by storm, and delivered it over to general plunder, and published, at the same moment, a proclamation, of the 26th of May, ordering his troops to shoot all those who had not laid down their arms, and taken an oath of obedience, and to burn every village where the *toefin* should

should be founded, and to put its inhabitants to death.

The transactions with *Modena* were on a smaller scale, but in the same character. *Bonaparte* began by signing a treaty, by which the Duke of *Modena* was to pay twelve millions of livres, and neutrality was promised him in return; this was soon followed by the personal arrest of the Duke and by a fresh extortion of two hundred thousand sequins; after this he was permitted, on the payment of a farther sum, to sign another treaty, called a *Convention de Sureté*, which of course was only the prelude to the repetition of similar exactions.

Nearly at the same period, in violation of the rights of neutrality and of the treaty which had been concluded between the French republic and the Grand Duke of Tuscany in the preceding year, and in breach of a positive promise given only a few days before, the French
army

army forcibly took possession of Leghorn, for the purpose of seizing the British property which was deposited there and confiscating it as prize; and shortly after, when Bonaparte agreed to evacuate Leghorn in return for the evacuation of the Island of Elbe, which was in the possession of the British troops, he insisted upon a separate article, by which, in addition to the plunder before obtained, by the infraction of the law of nations, it was stipulated, that the Grand Duke should pay the expence, which the French had incurred by this invasion of his territory.

In the proceedings towards *Genoa* we shall find not only a continuation of the same system of extortion and plunder, (in violation of the solemn pledge contained in the proclamations already referred to,) but a striking instance of the revolutionary means employed for the destruction of independent governments. A French minister was at that time resident at Genoa, which was acknowledged by France to be in a state of neutrality

trality and friendship : in breach of this neutrality *Bonaparte* began, in the year 1796, with the demand of a loan ; he afterwards, from the month of September, required and enforced the payment of a monthly subsidy, to the amount which he thought proper to stipulate ; these exactions were accompanied by repeated assurances and protestations of friendship ; they were followed, in May, 1797, by a conspiracy against the government, fomented by the emissaries of the French embassy, and conducted by the partizans of France ; encouraged, and afterwards protected by the French minister. The conspirators failed in their first attempt ; overpowered by the courage and voluntary exertions of the inhabitants ; their force was dispersed, and many of their number were arrested. *Bonaparte* instantly considered the defeat of the conspirators as an act of aggression against the French republic ; he dispatched an *Aid-de-camp* with an order to the Senate of this independent state ; first, to release all the French who were detained ; secondly, to punish those

those who had arrested them ; thirdly, to declare that *they had had no share in the insurrection* ; and fourthly, to disarm the people. Several French prisoners were immediately released, and a proclamation was preparing to disarm the inhabitants, when, by a second note, *Bonaparte* required the arrest of the three Inquisitors of State, and immediate alterations in the constitution ; he accompanied this with an order to the French minister to quit Genoa, if his commands were not immediately carried into execution ; at the same moment his troops entered the territory of the republic, and shortly after the councils, intimidated and overpowered, abdicated their functions. Three deputies were then sent to *Bonaparte* to receive from him a new constitution ; on the 6th of June, after the conferences at *Montebello*, he signed a convention, or rather issued a decree, by which he fixed the new form of their government ; he himself named provisionally all the members who were to compose it, and he required the payment of seven millions of

of livres, as the price of the subversion of their constitution, and their independence. These transactions require but one short comment; it is to be found in the official account given of them at *Paris*, which is in these memorable words :

“ *General Bonaparte* has pursued the only line
 “ of conduct which could be allowed in the re-
 “ presentative of a nation, *which has supported*
 “ *the war only to procure the solemn acknow-*
 “ *ledgement of the right of nations, to change the*
 “ *form of their government.* He contributed
 “ *nothing* towards the revolution of *Genoa*, but
 “ he seized the first moment to acknowledge the
 “ new government, as soon as he saw that it was
 “ *the result of the wishes of the people.*”*

It is unnecessary to dwell on the wanton attacks against *Rome*, under the direction of *Bonaparte* himself in the year 1796, and in the begin-

* *Rédacteur Officiel*, June 30, 1797.

ing of 1797, which terminated first, by the treaty of *Tolentino* concluded by Bonaparte, in which, by enormous sacrifices, the Pope was allowed to purchase the acknowledgment of his authority, as a Sovereign Prince; and secondly, by the violation of that very treaty, and the subversion of the Papal authority by *Joseph Bonaparte*, the brother and the agent of the General, and the Minister of the French Republic to the Holy See. A transaction, accompanied by outrages and insults towards the pious and venerable Pontiff (in spite of the sanctity of his age and the unfulfilled purity of his character) which even to a Protestant, seem hardly short of the guilt of sacrilege.

But of all the disgusting and tragical scenes which took place in Italy, in the course of the period I am describing, those which passed at *Venice* are perhaps the most striking, and the most characteristic: In May, 1796, the French army, under Bonaparte, in the full tide of its
success

success against the Austrians, first approached the
 territories of this republic, which from the com-
 mencement of the war had observed a rigid
 neutrality. Their entrance on these territories
 was as usual accompanied by a solemn procla-
 mation in the name of their general. "*Bonaparte,*
to the republic of Venice." "It is to deliver the
 "finest country in Europe *from the iron yoke of*
 "*the proud house of Austria*, that the French
 "army has braved obstacles the most difficult to
 "surmount. Victory in union with Justice has
 "crowned its efforts. The wreck of the enemy's
 "army has retired behind the Mincio. The
 "French army, in order to follow them, passes
 "over the territory of the republic of Venice;
 "but it will never forget, *that ancient friend-*
 "*ship unites the two republics. Religion, go-*
 "*vernment, customs, and property, shall be*
 "*respected.* That the people may be without
 "apprehension, the most severe discipline shall
 "be maintained. All that may be provided for
 "the army shall be faithfully paid for in money.

“ The general-in-chief engages the officers of
 “ the republic of Venice, the magistrates, and
 “ the priests, to make known these sentiments
 “ to the people, in order, that confidence may
 “ cement that friendship which has so long united
 “ the two nations, faithful in the path of honor,
 “ as in that of victory. The French soldier is ter-
 “ rible only to the enemies of his liberty and his
 “ government,” *Bonaparte*,*

This proclamation was followed by exactions
 similar to those which were practised against
 Genoa, by the renewal of similar professions
 of friendship and the use of similar means
 to excite insurrection. At length, in the spring
 of 1797, occasion was taken from distur-
 bances thus excited, to forge, in the name
 of the Venetian Government, a proclamation,†

* Vide Debrett's State Papers. vol. 5. p. 28.

† Vide Account of this transaction in the Proclamation of
 the Senate of Venice, April 12, 1798.—Debrett's State
 Papers, vol. 6th, page 67.

hostile

hostile to France, and this proceeding was made the ground for military execution against the Country, and for effecting by force the subversion of its ancient government and the establishment of the democratic forms of the French Revolution. This revolution was sealed by a treaty, signed in May, 1797, between *Bonaparte* and Commissioners appointed on the part of the new and revolutionary government of *Venice*. By the second and third secret articles of this treaty, Venice agreed to give as a ransom, to secure itself against all farther exactions or demands, the sum of three millions of livres in money, the value of three millions more in articles of naval supply, and three ships of the line; and it received in return the assurances of the friendship and support of the French Republic. Immediately after the signature of this treaty, the Arsenal, the Library, and the Palace of St. Marc were ransacked and plundered, and heavy additional contributions were imposed upon its inhabitants. And, in not more than
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four months afterwards, this very Republic of Venice, united by alliance to France, the creature of Bonaparte himself, from whom it had received the present of French liberty, was by the same Bonaparte transferred under the treaty of *Campo Formio* to “that iron yoke of the proud House of Austria,” to deliver it from which he had represented in his first proclamation to be the great object of all his operations.

Sir, all this is followed by the memorable expedition into Egypt, which I mention, not merely because it forms a principal article in the catalogue of those acts of violence and perfidy in which Bonaparte has been engaged; not merely because it was an enterprize peculiarly his own, of which he was himself the planner, the executor, and the betrayer; but chiefly because when from thence he retires to a different scene, to take possession of a new throne, from which he is to speak upon an equality with the Kings and Governors of Europe, he leaves behind

hind him, at the moment of his departure, a specimen, which cannot be mistaken, of his principles of negociation. The Intercepted Correspondence, which has been alluded to in this debate, seems to afford the strongest ground to believe, that his offers to the Turkish Government to evacuate Egypt, were made solely with a view to gain time ; that the ratification of any treaty on this subject was to be delayed with the view of finally eluding its performance, if any change of circumstances favourable to the French should occur in the interval. But whatever Gentlemen may think of the intention with which these offers were made, there will at least be no question with respect to the credit due to those professions by which he endeavoured to prove, in Egypt, his pacific dispositions. He expressly enjoins his successor, strongly and steadily to insist in all his intercourse with the Turks, that he came to Egypt with no hostile design, and that he never meant to keep possession of the country ; while, on the opposite page of the same
instruc-

instructions, he states in the most unequivocal manner, his regret at the discomfiture of his favourite project of colonizing Egypt, and of maintaining it as a territorial acquisition. Now, Sir, if in any note addressed to the Grand Vizier, or the Sultan, Bonaparte had claimed credit for the sincerity of his professions, that he came to Egypt with no view hostile to Turkey and solely for the purpose of molesting the British, interests, is there any one argument now used to induce us to believe his present professions to us, which might not have been equally urged on that occasion? would not that profession have been equally supported by solemn asseveration, by the same reference which is now made to personal character, with this single difference, that they would have then had one instance less of hypocrisy and falsehood, which we have since had occasion to trace in this very transaction.

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It is unnecessary to say more with respect to the credit due to his professions, or the reliance to be placed on his general character: But it will, perhaps be argued, that whatever may be his character, or whatever has been his past conduct, he has now an interest in making and observing peace. That he has an interest in making peace is at best but a doubtful proposition, and that he has an interest in preserving it is still more uncertain. That it is his interest to negotiate, I do not indeed deny; it is his interest above all to engage this country in separate negotiation, in order to loosen and dissolve the whole system of the confederacy on the Continent, to palsy, at once, the arms of Russia or of Austria, or of any other country that might look to you for support; and then either to break off his separate treaty, or if he should have concluded it, to apply the lesson which is taught in

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as school of policy in Egypt; and to revive, at his pleasure, those claims of indemnification which *may have been reserved to some happier period.**

This is precisely the interest which he has in negotiation; but on what grounds are we to be convinced that he has an interest in concluding and observing a solid and permanent pacification? Under all the circumstances of his personal character, and his newly-acquired power, what other security has he for retaining that power, but the sword? His hold upon France is the sword, and he has no other. Is he connected with the soil, or with the habits, the affections, or the prejudices of the country? He is a Stranger, a Foreigner, and an Usurper; he unites in his own person every thing that a pure Republican must detest; every thing that an enraged Jacobin

* Vide *Intercepted Correspondence from Egypt.*

has

has abjured; every thing that a sincere and faithful Royalist must feel as an insult. If he is opposed at any time in his career, what is his appeal? *He appeals to his Fortune*; in other words, to his army and his sword. Placing, then, his whole reliance upon military support, can he afford to let his military renown pass away, to let his laurels wither, to let the memory of his trophies sink in obscurity? Is it certain that, with his army confined within France, and restrained from inroads upon her neighbours, that he can maintain, at his devotion, a force sufficiently numerous to support his power? Having no object but the possession of absolute dominion, no passion but military glory, is it to be reckoned as certain, that he can feel such an interest in permanent peace, as would justify us in laying down our arms, reducing our expence, and relinquishing our means of security, on the faith of his engagements? Do we believe, that after the conclusion of peace, he would not still fight over the lost tro-

phies of Egypt, wrested from him by the celebrated victory of Aboukir, and the brilliant exertions of that heroic band of British seamen, whose influence and example rendered the Turkish troops invincible at *Acre*. Can he forget, that the effect of these exploits enabled Austria and Russia, in one campaign, to recover from France, all which she had acquired by his victories, to dissolve the charm, which, for a time, fascinated Europe, and to shew that their generals, contending in a just cause, could efface, even by their success, and their military glory, the most dazzling triumphs of his victorious and desolating ambition?

Can we believe, with these impressions on his mind, that, if after a year, eighteen months, or two years, of peace had elapsed, he should be tempted by the appearance of fresh insurrection in Ireland, encouraged by renewed and unrestrained communication with France, and fomented,

mented by the fresh infusion of Jacobin principles; if we were at such a moment without a fleet to watch the ports of France, or to guard the coasts of Ireland, without a disposeable army, or an embodied militia, capable of supplying a speedy and adequate reinforcement, and that he had suddenly the means of transporting thither a body of twenty or thirty thousand French troops: can we believe, that at such a moment his ambition and vindictive spirit would be restrained by the recollection of engagements, or the obligation of treaty? Or, if in some new crisis of difficulty and danger to the Ottoman Empire, with no British navy in the Mediterranean, no confederacy formed, no force collected to support it, an opportunity should present itself for resuming the abandoned expedition to Egypt, for renewing the avowed and favourite project of conquering and colonizing that rich and fertile country, and of opening the way to wound some of the vital interests of England, and to plunder the treasures of the East, in order to fill
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the bankrupt coffers of France? Would it be the interest of Bonaparte, under such circumstances, or his principles, his moderation, his love of peace, his aversion to conquest, and his regard for the independence of other nations;—would it be all, or any of these that would secure us against an attempt, which would leave us only the option of submitting without a struggle to certain loss and disgrace, or of renewing the contest which we had prematurely terminated, without allies, without preparation, with diminished means, and with increased difficulty and hazard?

Hitherto I have spoken only of the reliance which we can place on the professions, the character, and the conduct of the present First Consul; but it remains to consider the stability of his power. The Revolution has been marked throughout by a rapid succession of new depositaries of public authority, each supplanting his predecessor; what grounds have we to believe that

that this new Usurpation, more odious and more undisguised than all that preceded it, will be more durable? Is it that we rely on the particular provisions contained in the code of the pretended constitution, which was proclaimed as accepted by the French people, as soon as the garrison of Paris declared their determination to exterminate all its enemies, and before any of its articles could even be known to half the country, whose consent was required for its establishment?

I will not pretend to inquire deeply into the nature and effects of a Constitution, which can hardly be regarded but as a farce and a mockery. If, however, it could be supposed that its provisions were to have any effect, it seems equally adapted to two purposes, that of giving to its founder for a time an absolute and uncontrolled authority, and that of laying the certain foundation of disunion and discord, which if they once prevail must render the exercise of all the authority under the constitution

tution impossible, and leave no appeal but to the sword.

Is then military despotism that which we are accustomed to consider as a stable form of government? In all ages of the world, it has been attended with the least stability to the persons who exercised it, and with the most rapid succession of changes and revolutions. In the outset of the French revolution its advocates boasted that it furnished a security for ever, not to France only but to all countries in the world, against military despotism; that the force of standing armies was vain and delusive; that no artificial power could resist public opinion; and that it was upon the foundation of public opinion alone that any government could stand. I believe, that in this instance, as in every other, the progress of the French revolution has belied its professions; but so far from its being a proof of the prevalence of public opinion against military force, it is instead of the proof, the strongest exception from that doctrine which

which appears in the history of the world. Through all the stages of the Revolution military force has governed; public opinion has scarcely been heard. But still I consider this as only an exception from a general truth; I still believe, that, in every civilized country (not enslaved by a Jacobin faction) public opinion is the only sure support of any government; I believe this with the more satisfaction, from a conviction that if this contest is happily terminated, the established governments of Europe will stand upon that rock firmer than ever; and whatever may be the defects of any particular constitution, those who live under it will prefer its continuance to the experiment of changes which may plunge them in the unfathomable abyss of revolution, or extricate them from it, only to expose them to the terrors of military despotism. And to apply this to France, I see no reason to believe, that the present Usurpation will be more permanent than any other military despotism, which has been established by the same means, and with the same defiance of public opinion.

What, then, is the inference I draw from all that I have now stated? Is it, that we will in no case treat with Bonaparte? I say, no such thing. But I say, as has been said in the answer returned to the French Note, that we ought to wait for *experience, and the evidence of facts*, before we are convinced that such a treaty is admissible. The circumstances I have stated would well justify us if we should be slow in being convinced; but on a question of Peace and War, every thing depends upon degree, and upon comparison. If, on the one hand, there should be an appearance that the policy of France is at length guided by different maxims from those which have hitherto prevailed; if we should hereafter see signs of stability in the Government, which are not now to be traced; if the progress of the allied army should not call forth such a spirit in France, as to make it probable that the act of the Country itself will destroy the system now prevailing; if the danger, the difficulty, the risk of continuing the contest should increase, while the hope of complete ultimate success should be diminished;

minished ; all these, in their due place, are considerations, which, with myself and (I can answer for it) with every one of my colleagues, will have their just weight. But at present these considerations all operate one way ; at present there is nothing from which we can presage a favourable disposition to change in the French Councils ; There is the greatest reason to rely on powerful co-operation from our Allies ; there are the strongest marks of a disposition in the interior of France to active resistance against this new Tyranny ; and there is every ground to believe, on reviewing our situation, and that of the enemy, that if we are ultimately disappointed of that complete success which we are at present entitled to hope, the continuance of the contest, instead of making our situation comparatively worse, will have made it comparatively better.

If then I am asked how long are we to persevere in the war, I can only say, that no period can be accurately assigned beforehand. Considering the importance of obtaining complete security for the objects for which we contend, we

ought not to be discouraged too soon: but on the other hand, considering the importance of not impairing and exhausting the radical strength of the Country, there are limits beyond which we ought not to persist, and which we can determine only by estimating and comparing fairly, from time to time, the degree of security to be obtained by treaty, and the risk and disadvantage of continuing the contest,

But, Sir, there are some Gentlemen in the House, who seem to consider it already certain, that the ultimate success to which I am looking is unattainable: they suppose us contending only for the restoration of the French Monarchy, which they believe to be impracticable, and deny to be desirable for this Country. We have been asked in the course of this debate, do you think you can impose monarchy upon France, against the will of the nation? I never thought it, I never hoped it, I never wished it: I have thought, I have hoped, I have wished, that the time might come when the effect of the arms of the Allies might so far overpower the military

tary force which keeps France in bondage, as to give vent and scope to the thoughts and actions of its inhabitants. We have, indeed, already seen abundant proof of what is the disposition of a large part of the country ; we have seen almost through the whole of the Revolution the Western Provinces of France deluged with the blood of its inhabitants, obstinately contending for their ancient Laws and Religion. We have recently seen in the revival of that war, fresh proof of the zeal which still animates those countries, in the same cause. These efforts (I state it distinctly, and there are those near me who can bear witness to the truth of the assertion) were not produced by any instigation from hence ; they were the effects of a rooted sentiment prevailing through all those Provinces, forced into action by the *Law of the Hostages* and the other tyrannical measures of the Directory, at the moment when we were endeavouring to discourage so hazardous an enterprise. If, under such circumstances, we find them giving proofs of their unalterable perseverance in their principles ; if there is every reason to believe that the same disposition

tion prevails in many other extensive provinces of France; if every party appears at length equally wearied and disappointed with all the successive changes which the Revolution has produced; if the question is no longer between Monarchy, and even the pretence and name of Liberty, but between the ancient line of Hereditary Princes on the one hand, and a military tyrant, a foreign usurper, on the other; if the armies of that usurper are likely to find sufficient occupation on the frontiers, and to be forced at length to leave the interior of the Country at liberty to manifest its real feeling and disposition; what reason have we to anticipate, that the Restoration of Monarchy under such circumstances is impracticable?

The Learned Gentleman has, indeed, told us, that almost every man now possessed of property in France, must necessarily be interested in resisting such a change, and that therefore it never can be effected. If that single consideration were conclusive against the possibility of a change, for the same reason the Revolution itself,

by which the whole property of the Country was taken from its ancient possessors, could never have taken place. But though I deny it to be an insuperable obstacle, I admit it to be a point of considerable delicacy and difficulty. It is not indeed for us to discuss minutely, what arrangement might be formed on this point to conciliate and unite opposite interests; but whoever considers the precarious tenure and depreciated value of lands held under the revolutionary title, and the low price for which they have generally been obtained, will think it perhaps not impossible that an ample compensation might be made to the bulk of the present possessors, both for the purchase-money they have paid, and for the actual value of what they now enjoy; and that the ancient proprietors might be reinstated in the possession of their former rights, with only such a temporary sacrifice as reasonable men would willingly make to obtain so essential an object.

The Honourable and Learned Gentleman, however, has supported his reasoning on this part
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of the subject, by an argument which he undoubtedly considers as unanswerable—a reference to what would be his own conduct in similar circumstances; and he tells us that every landed Proprietor in France must support the present order of things in that country from the same motive that he and every Proprietor of Three per Cent. Stock would join in the defence of the Constitution of Great Britain. I must do the Learned Gentleman the justice to believe that the habits of his profession must supply him with better and nobler motives, for defending a Constitution which he has had so much occasion to study and examine, than any which he can derive from the value of his proportion (however large) of Three per Cents; even supposing them to continue to increase in price as rapidly as they have done, during the last three years; in which the security and prosperity of the Country has been established by following a system directly opposite to the counsels of the Learned Gentleman and his friends.

The Learned Gentleman's illustration however, though it fails with respect to himself, is happily

happily and aptly applied to the state of France; and let us see what inference it furnishes with respect to the probable attachment of monied men to the continuance of the revolutionary system, as well as with respect to the general state of public credit in that Country. I do not indeed know that there exists precisely any Fund of Three per Cents in France, to furnish a test for the patriotism and public spirit of the lovers of French Liberty. But there is another Fund which may equally answer our purpose — the capital of Three per Cent Stock which formerly existed in France has undergone a whimsical operation, similar to many other expedients of Finance which we have seen in the course of the Revolution — this was performed by a decree, which, as they termed it, *republicanised* their debt; that is, in other words, struck off, at once, two-thirds of the capital, and left the Proprietors to take their chance for the payment of interest on the remainder. This remnant was afterwards converted into the present Five per Cent Stock. I had the curiosity very lately to enquire what price it bore in the market, and I was told that

the price had somewhat risen from confidence in the new Government, and was actually as high as *seventeen*. I really at first supposed that my informer meant seventeen years purchase for every pound of interest, and I began to be almost jealous of revolutionary credit; but I soon found that he literally meant seventeen pounds for every hundred pounds capital stock of Five per Cent. that is, a little more than three and a half years purchase. So much for the value of revolutionary property, and for the attachment with which it must inspire its possessors towards the system of Government to which that value is to be ascribed!

On the question, Sir, how far the Restoration of the French Monarchy, if practicable, is desirable, I shall not think it necessary to say much. Can it be supposed to be indifferent to us or to the world, whether the Throne of France is to be filled by a Prince of the House of Bourbon, or by him whose principles and conduct I have endeavoured to develope? Is it nothing with a view to influence and example, whether the
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fortune of this last adventurer in the Lottery of Revolutions, shall appear to be permanent ? Is it nothing, whether a system shall be sanctioned which confirms by one of its fundamental articles, that general transfer of property from its ancient and lawful possessors, which holds out one of the most terrible examples of national injustice, and which has furnished the great source of revolutionary finance and revolutionary strength against all the Powers of Europe ?

In the exhausted and impoverished state of France, it seems for a time impossible that any system but that of robbery and confiscation, any thing but the continued torture, which can be applied only by the engines of the Revolution, can extort from its ruined inhabitants more than the means of supporting, in peace, the yearly expenditure of its Government. Suppose, then, the Heir of the House of Bourbon reinstated on the Throne, he will have sufficient occupation in endeavouring, if possible, to heal the wounds, and gradually to repair the losses of ten years of civil convulsion; to reanimate the drooping commerce,

commerce, to rekindle the industry, to replace the capital, and to revive the manufactures of the Country. Under such circumstances, there must probably be a considerable interval before such a Monarch, whatever may be his views, can possess the power which can make him formidable to Europe; but while the system of the Revolution continues, the case is quite different. It is true, indeed, that even the gigantic and unnatural means by which that Revolution has been supported, are so far impaired; the influence of its principles, and the terror of its arms, so far weakened; and its power of action so much contracted and circumscribed; that against the embodied force of Europe, prosecuting a vigorous war, we may justly hope that the remnant and wreck of this system cannot long oppose an effectual resistance.

But, supposing the confederacy of Europe prematurely dissolved; supposing our armies disbanded, our fleets laid up in our harbours, our exertions relaxed, and our means of precaution and defence relinquished; do we believe that the

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revolutionary power, with this rest and breathing-time given it to recover from the pressure under which it is now sinking, possessing still the means of calling suddenly and violently into action whatever is the remaining physical force of France, under the guidance of military despotism; do we believe that this revolutionary power, the terror of which is now beginning to vanish, will not again prove formidable to Europe? Can we forget, that in the ten years in which that power has subsisted, it has brought more misery on surrounding nations, and produced more acts of aggression, cruelty, perfidy, and enormous ambition, than can be traced in the History of France for the centuries which have elapsed since the foundation of its monarchy, including all the wars which in the course of that period have been waged by any of those Sovereigns, whose projects of aggrandizement, and violations of treaty, afford a constant theme of general reproach against the ancient government of France? And if not, can we hesitate whether we have the best prospect of permanent peace, the best security for the independence and safety

safety of Europe from the restoration of the lawful Government, or from the continuance of revolutionary power in the hands of *Bonaparte*?

In compromise and treaty with such a power, placed in such hands as now exercise it, and retaining the same means of annoyance which it now possesses, I see little hope of permanent security. I see no possibility at this moment of such a peace as would justify that liberal intercourse which is the essence of real amity; no chance of terminating the expenses or the anxieties of war, or of restoring to us any of the advantages of established tranquillity; and as a sincere lover of peace, I cannot be content with its nominal attainment; I must be desirous of pursuing that system which promises to attain, in the end, the permanent enjoyment of its solid and substantial blessings for this Country and for Europe. As a sincere lover of peace, I will not sacrifice it by grasping at the shadow, when the reality is not substantially within my reach.—

Cur igitur pacem nolo? Quia infida est, quia periculosa, quia esse non potest. If,

If, Sir, in all that I have now offered to the House, I have succeeded in establishing the proposition, that the system of the French Revolution has been such as to afford to Foreign Powers no adequate ground for security in negotiation, and that the change which has recently taken place has not yet afforded that security; if I have laid before you a just statement of the nature and extent of the danger with which we have been threatened; It would remain only shortly to consider, whether there is any thing in the circumstances of the present moment to induce us to accept a security confessedly inadequate against a danger of such a description.

It will be necessary here to say a few words on the subject on which Gentlemen have been so fond of dwelling, I mean our former Negotiations, and particularly that at Lisle in 1797. I am desirous of stating frankly and openly the true motives which induced me to concur in then recommending negotiation; and I will leave it to the House, and to the Country, to judge whether our conduct at that time was inconsistent

consistent with the principles by which we are guided at present. That revolutionary policy which I have endeavoured to describe, that gigantic system of prodigality and bloodshed by which the efforts of France were supported, and which counts for nothing the lives and the property of a nation, had at that period driven us to exertions which had, in a great measure, exhausted the ordinary means of defraying our immense expenditure, and had led many of those who were the most convinced of the original justice and necessity of the war, and of the danger of Jacobin principles, to doubt the possibility of persisting in it, till complete and adequate security could be obtained. There seemed, too, much reason to believe, that without some new measure to check the rapid accumulation of debt, we could no longer trust to the stability of that funding system, by which the Nation had been enabled to support the expense of all the different wars in which we have engaged in the course of the present century. In order to continue our exertions with vigour, it became necessary that a new and solid system of finance should

should be established, such as could not be rendered effectual but by the general and decided concurrence of public opinion. Such a concurrence in the strong and vigorous measures necessary for the purpose could not then be expected, but from satisfying the Country, by the strongest and most decided proofs, that peace on terms in any degree admissible was unattainable.

Under this impression we thought it our duty to attempt negotiation, not from the sanguine hope, even at that time, that its result could afford us complete security, but from the persuasion, that the danger arising from peace under such circumstances was less than that of continuing the war with precarious and inadequate means. The result of those negotiations proved, that the enemy would be satisfied with nothing less than the sacrifice of the honour and independence of the Country. From this conviction, a spirit and enthusiasm was excited in the Nation, which produced the efforts to which we are indebted for the subsequent change in our situation. Having witnessed that happy change,

having observed the increasing prosperity and security of the Country from that period, seeing how much more satisfactory our prospects now are, than any which we could then have derived from the successful result of negotiation, I have not scrupled to declare, that I consider the rupture of the negotiation, on the part of the enemy, as a fortunate circumstance for the country. But because these are my sentiments at this time, after reviewing what has since passed, does it follow that we were, at that time, insincere in endeavouring to obtain peace? The Learned Gentleman, indeed, assumes that we were, and he even makes a concession, of which I desire not to claim the benefit: he is willing to admit, that on our principles, and our view of the subject, insincerity would have been justifiable. I know, Sir, no plea that would justify those who are entrusted with the conduct of public affairs, in holding out to Parliament and to the Nation one object, while they were, in fact, pursuing another. I did, in fact, believe, at the moment, the conclusion of peace (if it could have been obtained) to be preferable to the

the continuance of the war under its increasing risks and difficulties. I therefore wished for peace, I sincerely laboured for peace. Our endeavours were frustrated by the act of the enemy. If, then, the circumstances are since changed, if what passed at that period has afforded a proof that the object we aimed at was unattainable, and if all that has passed since has proved, that, if peace had been then made, it could not have been durable, are we bound to repeat the same experiment, when every reason against it is strengthened by subsequent experience, and when the inducements which led to it at that time have ceased to exist?

When we consider the resources and the spirit of the Country, can any man doubt that if adequate security is not now to be obtained by treaty, we have the means of prosecuting the contest without material difficulty or danger, and with a reasonable prospect of completely attaining our object? I will not dwell on the improved state of public credit, on the continually increasing amount (in spite of extraordinary temporary burdens)

dens) of our permanent revenue, on the yearly accession of wealth to an extent unprecedented even in the most flourishing times of peace, which we are deriving, in the midst of war, from our extended and flourishing commerce; on the progressive improvement and growth of our manufactures; on the proofs which we see on all sides of the uninterrupted accumulation of productive capital; and on the active exertion of every branch of national industry, which can tend to support and augment the population, the riches, and the power of the Country.

As little need I recall the attention of the House to the additional means of action which we have derived from the great augmentation of our disposable military force, the continued triumphs of our powerful and victorious navy, and the events which, in the course of the last two years, have raised the military ardour and military glory of the Country to a height unexampled in any period of our history.

In addition to these grounds of reliance on our own strength and exertions, we have seen

the consummate skill and valour of the arms of our Allies proved by that series of unexampled success in the course of the last campaign, and we have every reason to expect a co-operation on the Continent, even to a greater extent, in the course of the present year. If we compare this view of our own situation with every thing we can observe of the state and condition of our enemy; if we can trace him labouring under equal difficulty in finding men to recruit his army, or money to pay it; if we know that in the course of the last year the most rigorous efforts of military conscription were scarcely sufficient to replace to the French armies at the end of the campaign, the numbers which they had lost in the course of it; if we have seen that that force, then in possession of advantages which it has since lost, was unable to contend with the efforts of the combined armies; if we know that even, while supported by the plunder of all the countries which they had overrun, those armies were reduced, by the confession of their commanders, to the extremity of distress, and destitute not only of the principal articles
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of military supply, but almost of the necessities of life; if we see them now driven back within their own frontiers, and confined within a country whose own resources have long since been proclaimed by their successive Governments to be unequal either to paying or maintaining them; if we observe, that since the last revolution, no one substantial or effectual measure has been adopted to remedy the intolerable disorder of their finances, and to supply the deficiency of their credit and resources; if we see through large and populous districts of France, either open war levied against the present usurpation, or evident marks of disunion and distraction which the first occasion may call forth into a flame; if, I say, Sir, this comparison be just, I feel myself authorized to conclude from it, not that we are entitled to consider ourselves certain of ultimate success, not that we are to suppose ourselves exempted from the unforeseen vicissitudes of war; but that, considering the value of the object for which we are contending, the means for supporting the contest, and the probable course of human events, we should be

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inexcusable, if at this moment we were to relinquish the struggle on any grounds short of entire and complete security : that from perseverance in our efforts under such circumstances, we have the fairest reason to expect the full attainment of our object ; but that at all events, even if we are disappointed in our more sanguine hopes, we are more likely to gain than to lose by the continuation of the contest ; that every month to which it is continued, even if it should not in its effects lead to the final destruction of the Jacobin system, must tend so far to weaken and exhaust it, as to give us at least a greater comparative security in any termination of the war : that, on all these grounds, this is not the moment at which it is consistent with our interest or our duty to listen to any proposals of negotiation with the present Ruler of France ; but that we are not therefore pledged to any unalterable determination as to our future conduct ; that in this we must be regulated by the course of events ; and that it will be the duty of His Majesty's Ministers from time to time to adapt their measures to any variation of circumstances,

to consider how far the effects of the military operations of the Allies or of the internal disposition of France correspond with our present expectations; and, on a view of the whole, to compare the difficulties or risks which may arise in the prosecution of the contest, with the prospect of ultimate success, or of the degree of advantage to be derived from its further continuance, and to be governed by the result of all these considerations, in the opinion and advice which they may offer to their Sovereign.

THE END.

